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## DANTE'S HERETICS AND THE RESURRECTION

Throughout the *Convivio* the sum of ancient wisdom is embodied in a trio of philosophers, Zeno, Epicurus, and Aristotle, who are, in that work, invariably mentioned in the same breath and who, despite their different doctrines and their respective approximation to truth, are finally reduced to collective equality as leaders of the three sects of the active life in uniform pursuit of perfect happiness on earth (*Conv.* IV, xxii, 13-18). Epicurus is mentioned for the last time in the *Convivio* towards the end of Book IV (*Conv.* IV, xxii, 4), in a passage probably written c. 1307-08; a year or two later he would reappear in *Inferno* X. During that brief interval the trio of ancient philosophers was dissolved, leaving Zeno and Aristotle in Limbo to discourse gravely among the « spiriti magni » within the walls of the « nobile castello » while, five circles below them, the heresiarch Epicurus would lie in one of the open, fiery tombs just within the walls of Dis. In the *Convivio* Dante had coined two images to convey the unanimity of Pagan thought as represented by Stoics, Peripatetics, and Epicureans; one was the « Atene celestiali » (*Conv.* III, xiv, 15), the other was the *Visitatio Sepulchri* (*Conv.* IV, xxii, 14-15). In terms of those metaphors the Epicureans eventually lost their promised place in the celestial Athens where, in harmony with Stoics and Peripatetics, they might have engaged in debate with the theological virtues; finally Zeno and Aristotle were to part company with Epicurus outside the open tomb on Easter Sunday morning<sup>1</sup>.

In recent years the fate of Epicurus and his followers has attracted renewed attention<sup>2</sup> and it has been argued that after the

<sup>1</sup> The *Divina Commedia* is cited from the edition by G. Petrocchi, 4 vols (Milan, 1966-67), the *Convivio* from the edition by M. Simonelli (Bologna, 1966).

<sup>2</sup> See especially J. A. Mazzeo, *Dante and Epicurus*, « Comparative Literature », 10, 1958, pp. 106-20; G. Padoan, *Il Canto degli Epicurei*, « Convivium », 27, 1959, pp. 12-39; A. Pézard, *Un Dante épicurien?*, in *Mélanges offerts à Etienne Gilson* (Toronto and Paris, 1959), pp. 499-536; R. Montano and G. Padoan, *Per l'inter-*

consistent inclusion of Epicurus in the trio of *prefigurationes veritatis* in the *Convivio* his exclusion from the Limbo of Pagan sages reflects Dante's definitive, orthodox condemnation of a then widespread 'Epicurean' materialism as professed by several famous near-contemporaries, in a punishment determined by their creed as it is defined in *Inf.* X, 13-15:

Suo cimitero da questa parte hanno  
con Epicuro tutti suoi seguaci,  
che l'anima col corpo morta fanno.

However, like other changes in Dante's thought as it matured through his work, his reappraisal of the Epicureans is a complex question susceptible of further enquiry and not fully explained by tracing the likely sources for Dante's differing concepts of Epicureanism in the *Convivio* and in the *Inferno*. Recent studies would suggest that between his relative praise in the one and his condemnation in the other the only common ground is the label which identifies the sect in both works. In these pages I hope to draw attention to a certain coherence of image and concept linking the 'Epicurus' passages in the *Convivio*, and to the transformation of that figurative element into the *poena* suffered by the heretics in *Inf.* IX-XI.

The hendecasyllable «che l'anima col corpo morta fanno» (*Inf.* X, 15) is commonly glossed with the prose lines on the immortality of the soul written several years earlier, a 'digression' belied by the vigour with which Dante harmonizes Pagan and Christian thought in that chapter of the *Convivio*:

Dico che intra tutte le bestialitadi quella è stoltissima, vilissima e dannosissima, chi crede dopo questa vita non essere altra vita; però che, se noi rivolgiamo tutte le scritture, sì de' filosofi come de li altri savi scrittori, tutti concordano in questo: che in noi sia parte alcuna perpetuale.  
(*Conv.* II, VIII, 8)

*pretazione del Canto degli Epicurei, «Convivium», 28, 1960, pp. 707-28; G. Stabile, the voce Epicurei, Enciclopedia Dantesca, 5 vols (Rome, 1970-76), vol. II, pp. 697-701; M. Sansone, the voce Farinata, Enciclopedia Dantesca, vol. II, pp. 804-809; and, for the wider problem of human perfectibility, K. Foster, The Two Dantes and Other Studies (London, 1977), pp. 156-253.*

This belief is not ascribed to Epicurus, who should by rights be included among the « filosofi » and « savi scrittori », all of whom rejected it, as is clear from the first three representatives of the Pagan wisdom — Aristotle in the *De anima*, all the Stoics, and Cicero in the *De senectute*. Presumably Cicero, on the showing of *Conv.* IV, vi, 12<sup>3</sup>, represents the Epicurean point of view, thus making up what will become the standard trio. It has been debated whether or not Dante then understood that « stoltissima bestialitate » to be the heresy fathered by Epicurus, but there is no doubt that Dante's refutation in this passage is drawn in part from I Corinthian 15, the *locus classicus* for the doctrine of the Resurrection, or rather for the doctrine that the bodily resurrection will follow the Resurrection of Christ as effect follows cause. St. Paul's terminology is made to blend with Aristotle's in a vernacular *contaminatio* which adumbrates the allegory outlined in *Conv.* IV, xxii, 14-15, the last occasion on which Dante will bring the three philosophical schools together:

Onde, con ciò sia cosa che molti che vivono interamente siano mortali, sì come animali bruti, e siano senza questa speranza tutti mentre che vivono, cioè d'altra vita, se la nostra speranza fosse vana, maggiore sarebbe lo nostro difetto che di nullo altro animale, con ciò sia cosa che molti già sono stati che hanno data questa vita per quella; e così seguirebbe che lo perfettissimo animale, cioè l'uomo, fosse imperfettissimo — ch'è impossibile — e che in quella parte, cioè la ragione, che è sua perfezione maggiore, fosse a lui cagione di maggiore difetto — che del tutto diverso pare a dire.

. (*Conv.* II, viii, 11)

Si autem Christus praedicatur quod resurrexit a mortuis, quomodo quidam dicunt in vobis quoniam resurrectio mortuorum non est? Si autem resurrectio mortuorum non est, neque Christus resurrexit. Si autem Christus non resurrexit, inanis est ergo praedicatio nostra, inanis est et fides vestra. Invenimur autem et falsi testes Dei, quoniam testimonium diximus adversus Deum, quod suscitaverit Christum, quem non suscitavit si mortui non resurgunt. Nam si mortui non resurgunt, neque Christus resurrexit. Quod si Christus non resurrexit, vana est fides vestra; adhuc enim estis in peccatis vestris. Ergo et qui dormierunt

<sup>3</sup> « E però tra 'l diletto e lo dolore non ponea mezzo alcuno, dicea che "voluptade" non era altro che "non dolore", sì come pare Tullio recitare nel primo di Fine di Beni » (*Conv.* IV, vi, 12).

in Christo, perierunt. Si in hac vita tantum in Christo sperantes sumus, miserabiliores sumus omnibus hominibus.

Nunc autem Christus resurrexit a mortuis, primitiae dormientium; quoniam quidem per hominem mors, et per hominem resurrectio mortuorum. Et sicut in Adam omnes moriuntur, ita et in Christo omnes vivificabuntur; unusquisque autem in suo ordine: primitiae Christus; deinde ii qui sunt Christi, qui in adventu ejus crediderunt.

(I Cor. 15.12-23)

So far, in spite of the borrowing, the Pauline hypothesis (in the indicative) is adapted to the Aristotelian argument. St. Paul's distinction between true and false witness to the bodily resurrection among Christians at Corinth, is here converted into the Philosopher's distinction between « animali bruti... interamente mortali » and « l'uomo... perfettissimo di tutti gli animali », in whom there is « parte alcuna perpetuale »; and thus St. Paul's « omnibus hominibus » becomes « nullo altro animale », predisposing, through this change of noun, the 'animal' definition of Epicureanism in *Conv.* IV, VI, 11<sup>4</sup>. Only at the end of the chapter, after the arguments for human immortality drawn from our experience of dreams, does Dante complete his case by conflating two verses from St. John's Gospel in which Christ proclaims the promise of eternal life to reside in His own person, in one passage admonishing the Pharisees and in the other consoling His disciples with an assertion of that divinity which the Resurrection will place beyond doubt:

Ancora: n'accerta la dottrina veracissima di Cristo, *la quale è via, verità e luce*: via perché per essa senza impedimento andiamo a la felicitade di quella immortalitade; verità, perché non soffera alcuno errore; luce, perché allumina noi ne la tenebra de la ignoranza mondana. Questa dottrina dico che ne fa certi sopra tutte altre ragioni, però che quello la n'hae data che la nostra immortalitade vede e misura. La quale noi non potemo perfettamente vedere mentre che 'l nostro immortale col mortale è mischiato; ma vedemolo per fede perfettamente, e per ragione lo vedemo con ombra d'oscuritade, la quale incontra per mistura del mortale con l'immortale.

(*Conv.* II, VIII, 14-15)

<sup>4</sup> « Altri filosofi furono, che videro e credettero altro che costoro; e di questi fu primo e prencipe uno filosofo che fu chiamato Epicuro, che, veggendo che ciascuno animale, tosto ch'è nato, è quasi da natura dirizzato nel debito fine, che fugge dolore e domanda allegrezza, quelli disse questo nostro fine essere voluptade: cioè diletto senza dolore » (*Conv.* IV, VI, 11).

Iterum ergo locutus est eis Jesus, dicens: Ego sum lux mundi; qui sequitur me non ambulat in tenebris, sed habebit lumen vitae.  
(John 8.12)

Dicit ei Jesus: Ego sum via, et veritas, et vita. Nemo venit ad Patrem, nisi per me.  
(John 14.6)

At this point in the *Convivio* the creed refuted by reason, experience, and revelation is called not Epicureanism but the denial of life after death. This heretical belief is recorded in the *Convivio* on the first occasion when three distinct representatives of Pagan wisdom are enlisted to foreshadow the truth of revelation, and the argument is buttressed by important scriptural sources for the doctrine of the bodily resurrection. Ultimately those texts were to determine the form of punishment which the Epicureans would suffer in the Sixth Circle of the *Inferno*, but the connection only becomes evident when the Epicureans are mentioned in the *Convivio* for the first time, at the end of the allegorical commentary to the third stanza of *Amor, che ne la mente mi ragiona*:

Onde sì come per lei molto di quello si vede per ragione, e per conseguente vedere per ragione, che senza lei pare maraviglia, così per lei si crede ogni miracolo in più alto intelletto puote avere ragione, e per conseguente può essere. Onde la nostra buona fede ha sua origine; da la quale viene la speranza de lo proveduto desiderare; e per quella nasce l'operazione de la caritate. Per le quali tre virtudi si sale a filosofare a quelle Atene celestiali, dove gli Stoici e Peripatetici e Epicurii, per l'al[bo]re de la veritate eterna, in uno volere concordevolmente concorrono.  
(*Conv.* III, xiv, 14-15)

The celebrated trope, « quelle Atene celestiali », normally glossed with metaphors in the *Commedia* such as « la sua città » (*Inf.* I, 128), « ciascuna è cittadina / d'una vera città » (*Purg.* XIII, 94-95), and « di quella Roma onde Cristo è romano » (*Purg.* XXXII, 102) as if it merely paved the way for a 'civic' vision of the other world, is drawn from the account, recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, of St. Paul's visit to Athens and his speeches to the Stoics and the Epicureans in the market place and in the Areopagus:

Quidam autem Epicurei et Stoici philosophi disserebant cum eo; et quidam dicebant: Quid vult seminiverbius hic dicere? Alii vero:

Novorum daemoniorum videtur annuntiator esse; quia Jesum et resurrectionem annuntiabat eis. Et apprehensum eum ad Aeropagum duxerunt, dicentes: Possumus scire quae est haec nova, quae a te dicitur, doctrina? Nova enim quaedam infers auribus nostris; volumus ergo scire quidnam velint haec esse. Athenienses autem omnes, et advenae hospites, ad nihil aliud vacabant nisi aut dicere, aut audire aliquid novi.

Stans autem Paulus in medio Areopagi, ait: Viri Athenienses, per omnia quasi superstitiosiores vos video. Praeteriens enim, et videns simulacra vestra, inveni et aram in qua scriptum erat: Ignoto Deo. Quod ergo ignorantes colitis, hoc ego annuntio vobis. Deus, qui fecit mundum et omnia quae in eo sunt, hic caeli et terrae cum sit Dominus, non in manufactis templis habitat; nec manibus humanis colitur indigens aliquo, cum ipse det omnibus vitam, et inspirationem, et omnia. Fecitque ex uno omne genus hominum inhabitare super universam faciem terrae, definiens statuta tempora, et terminos habitationis eorum, quaerere Deum, si forte attraherent eum, aut inveniant, quamvis non longe sit ab unoquoque nostrum. In ipso enim vivimus, et movemur, et sumus; sicut et quidam vestrorum poetarum dixerunt: Ipsius enim et genus sumus. Genus ergo cum simus Dei, non debemus aestimare auro, aut argento, aut lapidi, sculpturae artis et cogitationis hominis, Divinum esse simile. Et tempora quidem hujus ignorantiae despiciens Deus, nunc annuntiat hominibus ut omnes ubique poenitentiam agant; eo quod statuit diem in quo iudicaturus est orbem in aequitate, in viro in quo statuit, fidem praebens omnibus, suscitans eum a mortuis.

Cum audissent autem resurrectionem mortuorum, quidam quidem irridebant, quidam vero dixerunt: Audiemus te de hoc iterum. Sic Paulus exivit de medio eorum. Quidam vero viri adhaerentes ei, crediderunt; in quibus et Dionysius Areopagita, et mulier nomine Damaris, et alii cum eis.

(Acts 17.18-34)

The stumbling block for the Epicureans and Stoics at Athens was Paul's novel doctrine of the bodily resurrection, and although in the relative passage from the *Convivio* the Resurrection is not specified among the miracles which, when acknowledged « per ragione », lead to faith and the other theological virtues, it is the key miracle and source of faith which St. Paul urged his Athenian audience to accept and which, in Dante's ideal fusion of Classical wisdom and Christian virtue, will predispose that contemplative harmony promised to all the blessed after the Last Judgement. This philosophical concord in the « Atene celestiali... per l'al[bo]re de la veritade eterna », recalls the agreement between all philosophers on the question of the perfection induced by the spheres,

induced, that is, by the sciences which enable us to achieve our ultimate perfection, the contemplation of truth:

E la terza similitudine si è lo inducere perfezione ne le disposte cose. De la quale induzione, quanto a la prima perfezione, cioè de la generazione sustanziale, tutti li filosofi concordano che li cieli siano cagione, avvegna che diversamente questo pongano: qua[li] da li motori, sì come Plato, Avicenna e Algazel; quali da esse stelle, spezialmente l'anime umane, sì come Socrate, e anche Plato e Dionisio Academico; e quali da vertude celestiale che è nel calore naturale del seme, sì come Aristotile e li altri Peripatetici. Così de la induzione de la perfezione seconda le scienze sono cagione in noi; per l'abito de le quali potemo la veritade speculare, che è ultima perfezione nostra, sì come dice lo Filosofo nel sesto de l'Etica, quando dice che 'l vero è lo bene de lo intelletto. Per queste, con altre similitudini molte, si può la scienza « cielo » chiamare.

(*Conv.* II, XIII, 5-6)

The presence of Dionysius the Academician as the only Christian sage among the Greek and Arab philosophers who posited that celestial power, points to the thread which ties by association the theological virtues and Pagan speculation in a heavenly Athens, for Dionysius the Academician, generally taken to be the Areopagite, was the principal theoretician of the celestial order, « che giù in carne più a dentro vide / l'angelica natura e 'l ministero » (*Par.* X, 116-17), putative author of the *De celesti hierarchia*. St. Paul's star convert to Christianity after his speech on the Hill of Mars. And we may take it that as a 'Platonist' Dionysius represented the Peripatetics in St. Paul's audience from the major schools of Pagan thought<sup>5</sup>, much as Cicero, in *Conv.* II, VIII, 9, completes the trio by representing the one school not mentioned there by name.

The links between *Conv.* II, VIII, 7-16 («dico che intra tutte le bestialitadi») and *Conv.* III, XIV, 14-15 («si sale a filosofare a quelle Atene celestiali») are not hammered out, and in the latter passage the Stoics and Epicureans are specified by Dante because they are named, in Acts 17.18, as the opponents who led St. Paul from the market-place to the Areopagus. Yet the several strands of thought which we have singled out enable us to discern the idea of the

<sup>5</sup> That is, as Academician; see *Conv.* IV, VI, 14-15.



Resurrection as at least implicit in Dante's choice of the « Atene celestiali » as the *locus* towards which, through the practice of the virtues, one ascends to contemplate truth in company with the Epicureans and their colleagues.

In *Conv.* III, xiv, 15, the three schools appear to be listed in no particular order, although the rounding off of the trio may reflect an instinctive link between the « bestialitate stoltissima » rejected by Cicero (*Conv.* II, viii, 9) at the end of the first such trio of Pagan schools, and the idea of the bodily resurrection present in Dante's borrowing from Acts 17.18-34. In *Conv.* IV, vi, 9-16, the same three schools are now listed in order of their approximation to truth in defining the goal of human activity. Here the Epicureans follow the Stoics and precede the Peripatetics, but alone of the three their belief rests on the assumption that man is only a sentient creature whose end must be, like that of every other animal, the avoidance of pain and the pursuit of pleasure:

Altri filosofi furono, che videro e credettero altro che costoro; e di questi fu primo e prencipe uno filosofo che fu chiamato Epicuro, che, veggendo che ciascuno animale, tosto ch'è nato, è quasi da natura dirizzato nel debito fine, che fugge dolore e domanda allegrezza, quelli disse questo nostro fine essere voluptade: cioè diletto senza dolore. E però tra 'l diletto e lo dolore non ponea mezzo alcuno, dicea che « voluptade » non era altro che « non dolore », sì come pare Tullio recitare nel primo di Fine di Beni. E di questi, che da Epicuro sono Epicurei nominati, fu Torquato, nobile romano, disceso del sangue del glorioso Torquato, del quale feci menzione di sopra.

(*Conv.* IV, vi, 11-12)

The theoretical positions attributed to both the Stoics and the Epicureans may be equally inadequate<sup>6</sup>, and yet, of the three, that of Epicurus takes least account of man's intellect and will, and it carries no implication for a man's moral conduct; unlike the Stoic code, apparently equally remote from Peripatetic truth, which yet emphasizes the pursuit of truth and justice<sup>7</sup>. In that sense the

<sup>6</sup> See Foster, pp. 205-06.

<sup>7</sup> « Furono dunque filosofi molto antichi, de li quali primo e prencipe fu Zenone, che videro e credettero questo fine de la vita umana essere solamente la rigida onestade; cioè rigidamente, senza rispetto alcuno, la verità e la giustizia

Epicurean belief is, in terms of this definition, the closest to the « stoltissima, vilissima e dannosissima bestialitate, chi crede dopo questa vita non essere altra vita » (*Conv.* II, VIII, 8), a creed by which man is indistinguishable from the « animali bruti » that provide nature's model for the Epicureans in *Conv.* IV, VI, 11. There is, in *Conv.* IV, VI, 9-16, no evident scriptural echo to recall the doctrine of the Resurrection, but the Epicurean definition as given there ignores a spiritual side to human nature and sees man's end as lying totally in the appeasement of his senses; and this makes Epicureanism easily the most materialistic of the three doctrines in the passage and by that token more remote from the truth than Stoicism, which at least obliges some morally ordered activity, « cioè rigidamente, senza rispetto alcuno, la verità e la giustizia seguire » (*Conv.* IV, VI, 9). Yet if the Epicureans here follow the Stoics and precede the Peripatetics, Dante's knowledge and experience of a widespread popular 'Epicureanism' numbering many notable adherents must have preceded the writing of *Inf.* IX-XI by some years, even if it does not find its way into the *Convivio's* 'historical' survey of Pagan thought, whereas in academic circles the ancient doctrine of the Peripatetics had proved its durability and truth and was still universally held: « tiene... oggi lo reggimento del mondo in dottrina per tutte parti, e puotesi appellare quasi cattolica opinione » (*Conv.* IV, VI, 16). The closing paragraph of this survey of Pagan thought outlines the clear victory and current supremacy of one ancient philosophy over the other two; but its nearest competitor is that code which holds « voluptade » to be the proper end of man, a code which equates man with « ciascuno animale » so that he submits to a law of nature « tosto ch'è nato », a law binding on him only as long as he has bodily life. In the *Convivio* the materialism of Epicurean doctrine is nowhere more clearly stated than this.

The inherent strength of the Epicurean position is later confirmed in an important chapter where Dante defines the 'target' of human activity in terms of the « l'appetito d'animo naturale », an appetite which though divine in origin appears at first to be

seguire, di nulla mostrare dolore, di nulla mostrare allegrezza, di nulla passione avere sentore » (*Conv.* IV, VI, 9).

the same as any other natural appetite and at an early stage cannot be distinguished from the self-love displayed by brute animals:

E sì come ne le biade che, quando nascono, dal principio hanno quasi una similitudine ne l'erba essendo, e poi si vengono per processo dissimigliando, così questo naturale appetito, che [de] la divina grazia surge, dal principio quasi si mostra non dissimile a quello, che pur da natura nudamente viene; ma con esso, sì come l'erbate quasi di diversi biadi, si simiglia. E non pur [ne] li uomini, ma ne li uomini e ne le bestie ha similitudine; e questo appare, *ché ogni animale, sì come elli è nato, sì razionale come bruto, se medesimo ama, e teme e fugge quelle cose che a lui sono contrarie, e quelle odia.*

(Conv. IV, xxii, 5)

Since the formula is the same as that in the earlier definition of Epicureanism (« ciascuno animale, tosto ch'è nato, è quasi da natura dirizzato nel debito fine, che fugge dolore e domanda allegrezza », Conv. IV, vi, 11) that doctrine is now shown to be erroneous because it codifies a natural but infantile stage in human development and because it represents, in an adult capable of discerning otherwise, the deliberate choice of a path which only brute animals are obliged to take. And again we note that Dante cites Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, this time from a parable (I Cor. 9.24-27), drawn from Greek athletic contests, which illustrates the enviable Pagan virtue of bodily mortification:

Procedendo poi, sì come detto è, comincia una dissimilitudine tra loro, nel procedere di questo appetito, ché l'uno tiene uno cammino e l'altro un altro. Sì come dice l'Apostolo: « Molti corrono al palio, ma uno è quelli che 'l prende », così questi umani appetiti per diversi calli dal principio se ne vanno, e uno solo calle è quello che noi mena a la nostra pace.

(Conv. IV, xxii, 6)

This vigorous *exemplum* and the laboured steps by which Dante then proceeds to separate « corpo » from « animo » and rational appetite from sensual appetite (Conv. IV, xxii, 7-10) demonstrate the resilience of Epicurean « voluptade » as the goal of human activity. And when, after a further distinction between the « animo pratico » and the « animo speculativo » (Conv. IV, xxii, 11-12), Dante posits a supernatural object for speculation as the noblest and most perfect activity for man, the only analogy he can

find to adequately and accurately convey the laudable but necessarily imperfect exercise of unaided human virtue, proves to be the veneration of Christ's body buried in the sepulchre (*Conv.* IV, xxii, 13-15). We shall return to this passage shortly but we should note in advance the paradox whereby the reprehensible 'Epicurean' pursuit of bodily « voluptate » is transformed into a single image, that of the *corpus Christi*, which levels all the Pagan moral philosophies and which makes the doctrine of Epicurus no more inadequate than that of Aristotle when seen in the light of the Resurrection.

The absence of specific reference to the Resurrection in *Conv.* IV, vi is compensated for in the two chapters immediately adjacent to it. In the preceding chapter, where Dante notes a temporal coincidence between the birth of David and the founding of Rome<sup>8</sup>, and the vital role of Roman peace in the timing of the Incarnation, he inveighs against those who are blind to the design of Providence, in words that echo his first condemnation of 'Epicurean' materialism:

Oh ineffabile e incomprendibile sapienza di Dio che a una ora, per la tua venuta, in Siria suso e qua in Italia tanto dinanzi ti preparasti! E oh stoltissime e vilissime bestiuole, che a guisa d'uomo voi pascete, che presummete contr'a nostra fede parlare e volete sapere, filando e zappando, ciò che Iddio con tanta prudenza hae ordinato! Maladetti siate voi, e la vostra presunzione, e chi a voi crede!

(*Conv.* IV, v, 9)

Dico che intra tutte le bestialitadi quella è stoltissima, vilissima e dannosissima, chi crede dopo questa vita non essere altra vita.

(*Conv.* II, viii, 8)

Dante does not identify the teachers whom he stigmatizes as if they were Pharisees, but in a context of theological speculation into the secret workings of the Trinity (*Conv.* IV, v, 3) and the destiny of 'glorious Rome' (*Conv.* IV, v, 4), the ovine metaphor (« a guisa d'uomo voi pascete »)<sup>9</sup> and the betrayal of sound doctrine (« presummete contr'a nostra fede parlare ») by those whose activity

<sup>8</sup> See J. A. Scott, *La contemporaneità Enea-Davide*, « Studi danteschi », 49, 1972, pp. 129-34.

<sup>9</sup> The phrase recalls *Conv.* I, i, 7-8.

is reduced by hyperbole to the crudest manual labour («filando e zappando»), anticipates the invective that Dante, in the *Commedia*, will pour on the Curia and on prelates who abandon their pastoral duties or abuse their ecclesiastical privilege. In the two passages cited above, one labelling as «stoltissime e vilissime bestioline» those who deny the providential entry of the Son of God into human history, the other defining as «stoltissima, vilissima e dannosissima intra tutte le bestialitati» denial of any life after bodily death, we see the groundwork for the two heresies and the two heresiarchs singled out in the Sixth Circle of the *Inferno*, one of which denies the bodily resurrection (Epicurus and his followers, *Inf.* X, 13-15), the other of which denies the divinity of Christ (Pope Anastasius and Photinus, *Inf.* XI, 8-9).

In *Conv.* IV, VII, however, we find a specific and otherwise inexplicable allusion to the bodily resurrection which fits the pattern established by the other passages we have examined. The definition of Epicureanism (*Conv.* IV, VI, 11-13) comes towards the end of a three-chapter segment in which Dante establishes a concordance between political (Imperial) and philosophical (Peripatetic) concepts of the true goal of life on earth. It is an imposing combination, sanctioned by the pronouncements of Solomon and Ecclesiastes yet completely ignored by present Italian rulers (*Conv.* IV, VI, 18-19); and it is the daunting reality of Dante's task, that of dislodging the universal notion that nobility depends on lineage, which explains the vigour with which, in the following chapter, he resumes his commentary on the *sirma* of the second stanza of *Le dolci rime d'amor*. Now, he confronts a particular and tenacious instance of that ignorance which, at the beginning of the *Convivio*, he saw to be the most blameworthy obstacle to a man's natural desire for knowledge<sup>10</sup>. This chapter, *Conv.* IV, VII, is animated by a variety of simple metaphors, by some sustained topographical imagery, and by an even-handed use of biblical and Pagan *auctores*, figures blended to produce an unexpectedly rich tone that establishes the rhetorical mood for the opening cantos of the *Inferno*. The chapter closes (*Conv.* IV, VII, 11-14) with a robust geometric mock-up of the ontological scale, in which the crude distinction between men

<sup>10</sup> *Conv.* I, I, 3, 5.

and beasts, reinforced by a tissue of now-familiar pejoratives (« vilissimo », « malvagio », « animali bruti », « stoltezza », « bestia »), recalls his first philosophical discourse on immortality, in *Conv.* II, VIII, 7-16, where the sin of Epicurean materialism was similarly described though not named as such. This closing passage in *Conv.* IV, VII also recalls, now in a strongly adversative light, the 'animal' model for Epicurean doctrine given in the previous chapter *Conv.* IV, VI, 11-12.

By the end of Ch. VII, then, Dante has made ready to counter the erroneous opinions recorded in the second stanza of the canzone by asserting that the exercise of reason constitutes life for a human being, and that the man who does not consider rationally his true end is no better than an animal. This vivid contrast between notions of life and death applied to the use and abuse of the intellect implies a rejection of the Epicurean doctrine of « voluptade » derived from the animal model as outlined in the previous chapter. But more telling for our argument is the fact that at the beginning of Ch. VII Dante summarises his didactic task in a passage that links the ignorance of 'brute animals' with an example of bodily resurrection, in an association of ideas which looks by now to be almost instinctive:

Per che è da notare che pericolosissima negligenza è lasciare la mala opinione prendere piede; ché così come l'erba moltiplica nel campo non cultato, e sormonta e cuopre la spiga del frumento sì che, disparte agguardando, lo frumento non pare, e perdesi lo frutto finalmente, così la mala opinione ne la mente, non gastigata e corretta, si cresce e moltiplica sì che le spighe de la ragione, cioè la vera opinione si nasconde e quasi sepulta si perde. Oh com'è grande la mia impresa in questa canzone a volere omai così trifoglioso campo sarchiare, com'è quello de la comune sentenza, sì lungamente da questa cultura abbandonato! Certo non del tutto questo mondare intendo, ma solo in quelle parti dove le spighe de la ragione non sono del tutto sorprese; cioè coloro dirizzare intendo ne' quali alcuno lumetto di ragione per buona loro natura vive ancora, ché de li altri tanto è da curare quanto di bruti animali; però che non minore meraviglia mi sembra ridurre a ragione [colui in cui è la luce di ragione] del tutto spenta, che ridurre in vita colui che quattro dì è stato nel sepolcro.

(*Conv.* IV, VII, 3-4)

The opening image in these lines draws on the Parable of the Cockle or Darnel, recorded only in Matthew's Gospel where it follows the Parable of the Sower<sup>11</sup>. Dante couches the parable as a simile in which reason is like the blade of wheat struggling against the luxuriant overgrowth of erroneous opinion; and we note in this passage the echo of another parable from the same chapter in which both Mark and Luke give the Parable of the Sower, where the « lumetto di ragione » is like the lamp that needs to be exposed, and not hidden under a bushel measure of wheat<sup>12</sup>. If we allow a conflation of the Parables of the Darnel, of the Sower, and of the Seed growing to Harvest, then Dante's choice is particularly apt because in the synoptic Gospels both seed and lamp refer to Christ's teaching and His hearers' reception of the word<sup>13</sup>, which Dante now unerringly applies, through his own modified botanical imagery, to the obduracy expected of his general audience. But none of these parables explains the reference to Lazarus at the end of the paragraph, and we must look for another strand of New Testament grain imagery to perceive the fusion of otherwise scattered figures for the Resurrection which are drawn to the surface by the presence of Epicurus in the preceding chapter. The passage that underlies this harmony of grain imagery with the notion of the bodily resurrection is found in John 11-12, chapters which recount the resuscitation of Lazarus and Christ's last public teaching before the Passion<sup>14</sup>. In John 12 He foretells His own Resurrection in terms of an accepted law of nature:

Jesus autem respondit eis, dicens: Venit hora ut clarificetur Filius hominis. Amen, amen dico vobis, nisi granum frumenti cadens in terram, mortuum fuerit, ipsum solum manet; si autem mortuum fuerit, multum fructum affert.

(John 12.23-24)

<sup>11</sup> Matthew 13.1-43, and see *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, edited by R. Fuller, L. Johnston, and C. Kearns (London, 1969), articles 724a-724m.

<sup>12</sup> Mark 4.3-29; Luke 8.4-16.

<sup>13</sup> See *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, articles 724a-724m, 752a-752d, 778b, 812k-812l.

<sup>14</sup> See Thomas Aquinas, *Super Evangelium S. Ioannis Lectura*, edited by R. Cai (Turin and Rome, 1952), article 1639; C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 363-79; *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, articles 812a-812n.

St. Paul echoes this belief, if not this passage, in his first letter to the Corinthians<sup>15</sup>, in that same chapter on the bodily resurrection which Dante had already 'quoted' in *Conv.* II, VIII, 11:

Sed dicet aliquis: Quomodo resurgunt mortui? qualive corpore venient? Insiapiens, tu quod seminas non vivificatur, nisi prius moriatur. Et quod seminas, non corpus quod futurum est seminas, sed nudum granum, ut puta tritici, aut alicujus ceterorum. Deus autem dat illi corpus sicut vult, et unicuique seminum proprium corpus.

Non omnis caro, eadem caro; sed alia quidem hominum, alia vero pecorum, alia volucrum, alia autem piscium. Et corpora caelestia, et corpora terrestria; sed alia quidem caelestium gloria, alia autem terrestrium. Alia claritas solis, alia claritas lunae, et alia claritas stellarum; stella enim a stella differt in claritate. Sic et resurrectio mortuorum. Seminatur in corruptione, surget in incorruptione. Seminatur in ignobilitate, surget in gloria. Seminatur in infirmitate, surget in virtute. Seminatur corpus animale, surget corpus spiritale.

(I Cor. 15.35-44)

Dante fuses and condenses these passages into one past participle when he adds to the Parable of the Darnel the note of burial and loss: « cioè la vera opinione si nasconde e *quasi sepulta si perde* ». It is this otherwise otiose 'burial' of truth which leads him to see the correction of those deprived of any light of reason as a labour quite beyond him; to see it as a miracle equal to the last and greatest of Christ's miracles which proved to be the sign of His own Resurrection:

... però che non minore maraviglia mi sembra ridurre a ragione [colui in cui è la luce di ragione] del tutto spenta, che ridurre in vita colui che quattro dì è stato nel sepolcro.

(*Conv.* IV, VII, 4)

A summary of the ideas drawn from the passages in the *Convivio* examined so far — belief in the immortality of the soul, upheld by Pagan and Jewish sages and confirmed by Revelation; a harmony of Pagan thought and Christian virtue promised in a celestial counterpart of that city in which St. Paul preached the bodily resurrection to the philosophers in the Areopagus; an outline of the

<sup>15</sup> See M. Dahl, *The Resurrection of the Body* (London, 1962), pp. 11-19, 37-50; *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, articles 884a-884d.



various goals of « l'umano appetito » proposed by Greco-Roman philosophy, in which the Epicurean notion is confined to sentient life; his appraisal of the task of reviving a dead intellect in 'human brutes', as one demanding powers equal to those which brought Lazarus back to life — this tissue of ideas helps to explain the image and the allegory devised for the last and most remarkable of the passages in which the three schools of Pagan thought are banded together as *prefigurationes veritatis*:

E questa parte (lo 'ntelletto) in questa vita perfettamente lo suo uso avere non puote, lo quale avere è Iddio ch'è sommo intelligibile, se non in quanto considera lui e mira lui per li suoi effetti. E che noi domandiamo questa beatitudine per somma, e non altra, cioè quella de la vita attiva, n'ammaestra lo Vangelio di Marco, se bene quello volemo guardare. Dice Marco che Maria Maddalena e Maria Iacobi e Maria Salomè andarò per trovare lo Salvatore al monimento, e quello non trovarò; ma trovarò uno giovane vestito di bianco che disse loro: « Voi domandate lo Salvatore, e io vi dico che non è qui; e però non abbiate temenza, ma ite, e dite a li discepoli suoi e a Piero che elli li precederà in Galilea; e quivi lo vedrete, sì come vi disse ». Per queste tre donne si possono intendere le tre sette de la vita attiva, cioè li Epicurei, li Stoici e li Peripatetici, che vanno al monimento, cioè al mondo presente che è recettaculo di corruttibili cose, e domandano lo Salvatore, cioè la beatitudine, e non la trovano.

(*Conv.* IV, xxii, 13-15)

While Epicurus and Zeno must once more cede to the « verace opinione d'Aristotile e de li altri Perapetici » in defining the goal of earthly activity (*Conv.* IV, xxii, 4), all three schools fall equally short of proposing a beatitude that will completely satisfy man's « appetito razionale », for that can only be assuaged in the contemplation of « Iddio ch'è sommo intelligibile ». The striking analogy conceived by Dante to illustrate the limitations of the Pagan pursuit of beatitude was anticipated in *Conv.* IV, xvii, where the superiority of the contemplative over the active life is exemplified in Christ's reference to the part chosen by Mary Magdalene:

E Cristo l'afferma con la sua bocca, nel Vangelio di Luca, parlando a Marta, e rispondendo a quella: « Marta, Maria, sollicita se' e turbiti intorno a molte cose: certamente una cosa è necessaria », cioè quello che fai. E soggiugne: « Maria ottima parte ha eletta, la quale non le sarà tolta ». E Maria, secondo che dinanzi è scritto a queste parole del Vangelio, a' piedi di Cristo sedendo, nulla cura del ministerio de la casa

mostrava; ma solamente le parole del Salvatore ascoltava. Che se moralmente ciò volemo esponere, volse lo nostro Signore in ciò mostrare che la contemplativa vita fosse ottima, tutto che buona fosse l'attiva: ciò è manifesto a chi ben vuole porre mente a le evangeliche parole. (Conv. IV, xvii, 10-11)

Dante's warning to consider carefully «le evangeliche parole» also applies to his own use of Scripture, nowhere in the *Convivio* more idiosyncratic than in *Con.* IV, xxii, 14-15, where Mary Magdalene, type of the contemplative life in the Lucan passage, is made to represent one of the sects of the *active* life through Dante's use of the Marcan Resurrection narrative. But more remarkable than the allegory is the way Dante's Gospel text pinpoints the notions of Resurrection and bodily resurrection which we have seen are present in the other passages that list the three schools of Pagan thought. Dante's most daring analogy is not to identify the three Maries with «le tre sette de la vita attiva» but to liken the height of pre-Christian wisdom to the body of Christ buried in the sepulchre, and to make the inadequacy of Pagan thought lie precisely in its inability to conceive of the Resurrection — just as St. Paul had encountered it in the Areopagus. Here the three sects of the active life are no longer *prefigurationes veritatis*, as they were in *Conv.* II, viii, 7-16 and *Conv.* III, xiv, 15. The Marcan narrative makes explicit the contrast between the doctrine of the Resurrection and the materialism more or less latent in all the Pagan philosophies, the crudest and most extreme form of which, in the *Convivio*, is clearly that professed by the Epicureans, whose goal is a «voluptate» akin to that instinctively pursued in the animal kingdom. In Dante's allegory of the *Visitatio Sepulchri*, for which it seems no clear model can be found and which Bruno Nardi judged to be an otiose addition to the first redaction of the *Convivio*<sup>16</sup>, even the Peripatetic doctrine is as wanting as that of Epicurus when seen in the light of the «sommò intelligibile», and this paradox is all the stronger for aligning Mary Magdalene with the Epicureans as

<sup>16</sup> B. Nardi, *Alla illustrazione del Convivio dantesco: a proposito dell'edizione di Giorgio Rossi*, «Giornale storico della letteratura italiana», 95, 1930, p. 110. The note *ad locum* in the Busnelli-Vandelli edition of the *Convivio* is unconvincing; *Il Convivio*, edited by G. Busnelli and G. Vandelli, second edition with appendix by A. E. Quaglio, 2 vols (Florence, 1964), vol. II, pp. 284-85.

they make their way to the « recettaculo di corruttibili cose »: « *Maria Maddalena e Maria Iacobi e Maria Salomè... cioè li Epicurei, li Stoici e li Peripatetici* ». If there is any argument to be drawn from this change of order compared with *Conv.* IV, VI, 9-13 (Stoics before Epicureans), then the sect whose goal is most immediately identifiable with the « mondo presente » is that of the Epicureans, just as the Magdalene is the only figure common to all four Gospel accounts of the *Visitatio*<sup>17</sup>, the disciple most eager to anoint the body of her Lord, the figure nearest the tomb in pictorial representations of the *Visitatio Sepulchri*.

The Resurrection allegory is puzzling at first sight. In all the other passages that list the three schools of Pagan thought, the Peripatetics were distinguished from the Stoics and Epicureans by the lasting truth of their moral philosophy and by the conformity of their doctrine to current orthodoxy. Now, they are reduced to the same level as the other two, a level they will hold until Aristotle and Zeno pass before the pilgrim's eye in the « nobile castello » and Epicurus drops below them to the Sixth Circle. This apparent reduction represents, in the prose work, Dante's final assessment of the relative merits of the Pagan philosophies in the light of the Resurrection; that is, the notion which had figured in a subordinate rhetorical role when those philosophies were earlier recalled, is now used as a narrative model and a term of comparison to measure not the theoretical value of these philosophies, but their aims and their achievements in the light of « la nostra perfetta beatitudine » (*Conv.* IV, XXII, 18). Yet Dante's Resurrection allegory is not unheralded. It follows the chapter in which he assembles his evidence for the immortality of the soul, a chapter in which the uncertainties of Pagan doctrine are settled, « per via teologica », by an appeal to Revelation. The direct creation of the rational soul by God is what finally guarantees the immortality of the soul, and it is this doctrine which should prepare us for the image of the three schools as the three Maries outside the empty tomb. The assertion of the soul's immortality in *Conv.* II, VIII is matched in *Conv.* IV, XXI by the

<sup>17</sup> In Matthew, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary; in Mark, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome; in Luke, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, the other women; in John, Mary Magdalene.

first outline of what will be Dante's final proof of the soul's immortality, in a doctrine that will come to its fullness in *Purg.* XXV<sup>18</sup>; but we can see that the string of pejoratives and the list of textbook arguments in *Conv.* II, VIII, 8-16, is finally replaced by a vivid scriptural allegory whose figurative terms were only gradually and partially disclosed across the *stesura* of the *Convivio*. The final step in Dante's progressive clarification of Resurrection imagery in relation to Pagan thought was to single out the Epicureans as the prime heretics condemned to suffer in open tombs in the Sixth Circle of the *Inferno*.

This passage in *Conv.* IV, XXII is thus not an exception to the series we have examined, but its climax; and, as we might expect when Dante cites *in extenso* the sacred text open at his elbow, in support of a novel argument vital at this moment in his synthesis of Philosophy and Revelation, the texts are chosen with extreme care. He cites Mark for the three Maries, Matthew for the rolling away of the stone. Mark is the only evangelist to name *three* women as bearing ointments to the sepulchre « when the sabbath was past », and thus « lo Vangelio di Marco » supplied the only clear numerical parallel for the three sects of the active life<sup>19</sup>. It was this passage which, in the Latin rite, provided the Gospel reading for the Mass of Easter Sunday morning and on which the traditional iconographic image for the Resurrection — the three Myrophores beside the empty tomb — was based<sup>20</sup>. By the early fourteenth century direct representation of the risen Christ began to replace, in Italy, this Byzantine image for the Resurrection, but the *Convivio* was written in the last decade during which the old formula was faith-

<sup>18</sup> See E. Gilson, *Dante the Philosopher*, translated by D. Moore (London, 1948), pp. 129-42; B. Nardi, *Dante e la cultura medievale* (Bari, 1948), pp. 284-308.

<sup>19</sup> For a summary of the higher critical approach to variations in the four Gospel accounts see R. E. Brown, *The Virginal Conception and the Bodily Resurrection of Jesus* (London, 1974), pp. 113-25, useful comparative table, p. 118.

<sup>20</sup> See J. Villette, *La Résurrection du Christ dans l'art chrétien du II<sup>e</sup> au VII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1957); L. Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, 3 vols (Paris, 1955-59, reprinted 1974), vol. II, pp. 538-50; A. Grabar, *Christian Iconography: A Study of its Origins* (Princeton, 1968), pp. 123-27. For the growth of the Easter play and the liturgical contribution to the iconography see K. Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1933), vol. I, pp. 239-450; R. Woolf, *The English Mystery Plays* (London, 1972), pp. 3-24, 274-80.

fully reproduced in Tuscany both in mosaic and on panel. This point can be illustrated by two well known examples. The lower bands of the narrative scenes on the cupola of the Baptistery at Florence are generally held to have been completed by the early Trecento<sup>21</sup>. In the last episode of the *Vita Christi*, at the end of the third band adjoining the line of the apostles to the Pantocrator's right, the three Maries crowd together on the left of the frame, caught in the gesture of fear which the angel is trying to quell<sup>22</sup>. A similar composition was painted by Duccio and his assistants on the reverse of the *Maestà* panel, about the time Dante ceased work on the *Convivio*<sup>23</sup>. In the fourth narrative scene of the post-Crucifixion sequence Duccio depicted the Resurrection as Mark's Gospel tells it, in one of the last authoritative and 'uncontaminated' Western versions of the Oriental formula<sup>24</sup>. His composition, not

<sup>21</sup> A. Venturi, *Storia dell'Arte Italiana*, 11 vols (Milan, 1901-40, reprinted 1967), vol. V, pp. 217-36.

<sup>22</sup> Reproduced on 35 mm. colour slide no. FO 28, Scala, Florence.

<sup>23</sup> Reproduced in E. Carli, *Duccio di Buoninsegna* (Milan, 1961), Plate 53; and on 35 mm. colour slide no. 64 in *Duccio di Buoninsegna: l'opera autografa*, with text by E. Carli (Dialibri Scala, Florence, 1975). For a reinterpretation of the contract and of the workshop execution of the *Maestà* between 1308 and 1311, see J. Stubblebine, *Duccio and His Collaborators on the Cathedral Maestà*, « Art Bulletin », 55, 1973, pp. 185-204.

<sup>24</sup> Uncontaminated in the sense that Duccio uses only the Marcan source (the three Maries and the single angel), unlike contemporary Italian composite Resurrection scenes, also found in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Byzantine painting (see E. Kitzinger, *The Art of Byzantium and the Medieval West: Selected Studies*, edited by W. E. Kleinbauer (Bloomington and London, 1976), p. 370, Plate 18), in e.g. Giotto's fresco in the Scrovegni Chapel (no *Visitatio Sepulchri*; to the left, Matthew's sleeping soldiers and John's two angels, to the right, John's *Noli me tangere*) and Pacino di Bonaguida's panel of the *Lignum vitae*, in the Accademia Gallery, Florence (roundel no. 34, Matthew's angel and sleeping soldiers in left foreground, John's *Hortulanus* and the Magdalene behind the open tomb), reproduced on 35 mm. colour slide in *La pittura italiana del '300*, 2 vols (Dialibri Scala, Florence, 1973), vol. II, 'Firenze nella prima metà del Trecento', no. 2, 'Albero di San Bonaventura'. The most interesting juxtaposition occurs in the early fourteenth-century Florentine illuminated *laudario* MS. Banco Rari 18, in the Biblioteca Nazionale, Florence, where the initial for the first Resurrection *lauda*, « Co la madre del beato » (f. 30r) depicts the three Maries and the single angel, with a group of sleeping soldiers in the lower foreground; while the initial for the next *lauda*, « Gesù Cristo glorioso » (f. 31v) shows Christ alone, stepping

cluttered with any superfluous narrative detail, reproduces from the adjoining frame (the Entombment and Threnody) the steep mountain crags in the background, and in the central foreground the sarcophagus, rectangular in the Occidental style and with indented panels on each side, largely unobscured in its foreshortened solidity, on the closed cover of which the body of Christ was there laid out<sup>25</sup>. The Resurrection is conveyed by the dramatic change of foreground compositional detail against the identical mountain backdrop. Now, the three Myrophores standing on the left and the angel seated at the centre-right reveal the black emptiness of the tomb, across the open mouth of which the cover is tilted at an angle that defies gravity to demonstrate the divine power that has removed it and has resuscitated the body that 'a moment' ago was lying on it before being enclosed beneath it. And in Duccio's panel Mary Magdalene is easily recognisable in her flame-red cloak at the head of the group of women<sup>26</sup>.

It could well be that the Marcan Gospel account was refreshed in Dante's mind by some contemporary depiction of the Maries clustered in a compact and homogeneous group at the foot of the open tomb, suggesting an image for the three Pagan schools finally shorn of their differences and reduced to collective anonymity in

out of the sarcophagus against a rocky background. These miniatures are reproduced, respectively, in F. Liuzzi, *La lauda e i primordi della melodia italiana*, 2 vols (Rome, 1935), vol. II, pp. 85, 89.

<sup>25</sup> For the transformation of the *tugurium* sepulchre into the rectangular stone of unction and the place of lamentation, see N.C. Brooks, *The Sepulchre of Christ in Art and Liturgy* (Illinois, 1921, reprinted 1970), pp. 13-25; *The St. Albans Psalter*, by O. Pächt, C.R. Dodwell, F. Wormald (London, 1960), pp. 71-72, 93; O. Pächt, *The Rise of Pictorial Narrative in Twelfth-Century England* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 27-29; Réau, II, pp. 519-20. For other compositional elements in the depiction of the Entombment, *Visitatio Sepulchri*, and Resurrection see Peter Comestor, *Historia Scholastica*, in *Patrologia latina*, edited by J.-P. Migne, vol. 198, coll. 1634-38, summarized in *The Anglo-Norman Test of the 'Holkham Bible Picture Book'*, edited by F.P. Pickering (Oxford, 1971), pp. 114-16.

<sup>26</sup> For the narrow range of thirteenth-century Italian depictions of the *Visitatio Sepulchri*, most of which show the plain Marcan formula, see *Pittura italiana del Duecento e Trecento: Catalogo della Mostra Giottesca di Firenze del 1937*, edited by G. Sinibaldi and G. Brunetti (Florence, 1943), Plates 1b, 4, 13a, 14a, 20a, 50a, 59a, b, d, 61a, b. E. Sandberg-Vavalà, *La croce dipinta italiana* (Verona, 1929) was not available to me.

their search for earthly perfection. It is notable that just as the Master of the San Giovanni mosaics, following a well established pictorial convention, brought together in his frame the three Maries from Mark's Gospel and the sleeping soldiers from Matthew 28.4, and just as Giotto, in his fresco of the Resurrection in the Arena Chapel, juxtaposed Matthew's sleeping soldiers with John's *Noli me tangere*, so Dante, with a similar freedom related to his own compositional ends, conflated Mark's account with that of Matthew, not in the detail of the sleeping soldiers but in the narrative addition, also peculiar to Matthew, which describes the descent of the angel and the rolling back of the stone:

... ma uno giovane truovano in bianchi vestimenti, lo quale, secondo la testimonianza di Matteo e anche de li altri, era angelo di Dio. E però Matteo disse: « L'angelo di Dio discese di cielo, e vegnendo volse la pietra e sedea sopra essa. E 'l suo aspetto era come folgore, e le sue vestimenta erano come neve ».

(Conv. IV, xxii, 15)

Vespere autem sabbati, quae lucescit in prima sabbati, venit Maria Magdalene, et altera Maria videre sepulchrum. Et ecce terraemotus factus est magnus. Angelus enim Domini descendit de caelo, et accedens revolvit lapidem, et sedebat super eum. Erat autem aspectus ejus sicut fulgur: et vestimentum ejus sicut nix.

(Matthew 28.1-3)

Dante translates the two verses apparently to gloss his preceding interpretation of the Marcan narrative and to lead in to the allegory developed in the next paragraph; and yet, whereas in the other three Gospels the women found the stone already rolled back, Matthew's account is close to a description of the actual Resurrection<sup>27</sup>, thus providing for Dante that dramatic detail which confirms Christ's victory over death and its attendant promise of the bodily resurrection, signified by the removal of the stone from the sepulchre<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> See Brown, p. 119, note 197.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Catena Aurea in Quatuor Evangelia*, edited by A. Guarienti, 2 vols (Turin, 1953), vol. I, p. 420: « Sequitur *Et accedens revolvit lapidem*, non ut egressuro Domino ianuam pandat, sed ut egressus eius iam facti hominibus praestet indicium. Qui enim mortalis clauso virginis utero potuit nascendo ingredi

Without attempting to force into a single mould these related passages from the *Convivio* written over a period of some three to four years<sup>29</sup>, and without confusing the definition of Epicureanism given in *Conv.* IV, VI, 11 with that given in *Inf.* X, 14-15, it is clear that the image of the Resurrection appears consistently, in one or other of its forms, in passages of the *Convivio* where Epicureans join Stoics and Peripatetics as Pagan representatives of the philosophies of human beatitude; and we see this nowhere more clearly than in the last of the four passages, where a conflated Gospel narrative, heightened by the selection of these very details depicted in contemporary icons of the Resurrection, allows Dante to see in the three Maries at the Sepulchre his three schools of ancient wisdom, no longer separable from one another but united in their search for a « beatitudine... quasi imperfetta ne la vita attiva ». I would argue that the Pauline doctrine of the bodily resurrection, referred to in that opening passage where denial of the soul's immortality runs counter to the wisdom of the ancients (*Conv.* II, VIII, 7-16), ensured the recurrence of the idea of the Resurrection embedded in the image of « Atene celestiali » (*Conv.* III, XIV, 15); that it underlies the choice of an 'animal' model for the Epicurean

mundum, ipse factus immortalis, clauso sepulcro potuit resurgendo exire de mundo. REMIGIUS. Significat autem revolutio lapidis reservationem sacramentorum Christi, quae littera legis tegebantur: lex namque in lapide scripta fuit, et ideo per lapidem designatur. SEVERIANUS. Non autem dixit: Volvit, sed *Revolvit lapidem*: quia lapis advolutus probavit mortem, et revolutus extitit resurrectionis assertor. Mutatur hic ordo rerum: sepulcrum mortem, non mortuum devorat; domus mortis mansio fit vitalis; uteri nova forma mortuum recipit, reddit vivum»; vol. II, p. 310: « EUSEBIUS. Iacebat autem organum Verbi extinctum: magnus vero lapis claudebat sepulcrum, quasi mors eum duxisset captivum; sed nondum lapso triduo vita se promit iterum post sufficientem mortis convictionem; unde sequitur *Et invenerunt lapidem revolutum a monumento*. THEOPHYLACTUS. Nam Angelus revolverat eum, ut testatur Matthaeus. ORIGENES. Amotus est autem lapis post resurrectionem propter mulieres, ut credant resurrexisse Dominum, videntes monumentum vacuum corpore»; p. 578: « Surrexit quidem Dominus, lapide et signaculis sepulchro iniacentibus. Quia vero oportebat et alicis certificari, aperitur monumentum post resurrectionem, et ita creditur quod factum est ». For the role of the linen-cloth, representing the discarded grave-clothes of Christ, in early liturgical drama, see Woolf, pp. 6-9.

<sup>29</sup> 1304-1307, see M. Barbi's Introduction to the Busnelli-Vandelli edition, pp. XVI-XIX.



« voluptade » defined in *Conv.* IV, VI, 11; that it is resumed in the following chapter (*Conv.* IV, VII, 4), in the grain image that ends with a reference to Lazarus; and that all these allusions are traced to their literal, synoptic source in *Conv.* IV, XXII, 14-15:

E che noi domandiamo questa beatitudine per somma, e non altra, cioè quella de la vita attiva, n'ammaestra lo Vangelio di Marco, se bene quello volemo guardare...

The last and the clearest image of the Resurrection in the *Convivio* demonstrates, towards the end of the unfinished prose work, Dante's confidence in the power of imagery to carry argument, as distinct from the earlier scholastic style of reasoning. In this case he gives, through an original but not unheralded allegory, his definitive answer to the central problem examined in the *Convivio*, that of « la nostra beatitudine ». The images and allusions that we have tried to piece together allow us to see, in one sample, advanced stages of that complex process by which Dante acquired the apparently effortless command of 'polysemous' imagery which is evident by the middle cantos of the *Inferno*<sup>30</sup>. Certainly, within the *Inferno*, a major proof of those powers is Dante's figurative handling of the passage from Upper to Lower Hell, brilliantly resolved in the sepulchral setting enclosed by the walls of Dis. And yet that scene which unfolds at the end of *Inferno* IX is but the final shape of an image for the Resurrection which we have watched solidify and clarify across the *Convivio*, from fragmentary Pauline allusions, through direct reference to the raising of Lazarus, to a faithful translation of passages from the post-Crucifixion narratives in Matthew and Mark. The last step in the process whereby Epicureanism and the Resurrection were brought into conjunction was to isolate the materialism inherent in the ancient doctrine of Epicurus and fuse it with the current 'Epicurean' denial of life after death; and then, to single out from the Resurrection story the concrete, visual element which was the unmistakable sign of risen life and bodily victory over death — the tomb with its cover

<sup>30</sup> For a description of early stages in the development of Dante's imagery see P. Boyde, *Dante's Style in His Lyric Poetry* (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 107-54, 288-316.

removed — and adapt it, within the topography of the circle devised for heresy, to the system of *loci* demonstrating the sin itself and the aptness of a particular punishment for a particular sin.

Dante's changed concept of Epureanism in *Inf.* X has been the subject of various perceptive studies in recent years, but so far little attention has been paid to the notion of the bodily resurrection in the *Convivio* as the conceptual germ for the *poena* suffered by the heretics and for the *contrapasso* by which their punishment is shown to reflect their sin. In the pages that remain it will be argued that the image of the Resurrection, as it surfaces in those passages of the *Convivio* where the major schools of pre-Christian wisdom are listed in their strenghts and in their limitations, was transformed in *Inf.* IX-XI into the *poena* embodied in the open tomb in which the heretics lie, and that the punishment for those particular heretics who deny the bodily resurrection — « che l'anima col corpo morta fanno » — determined the form of punishment for all the heretics in the circle.

A connection between the Resurrection and the tombs of the heretics has already been noted by several scholars. In 1927 Wilkins suggested that the row of six open tombs below the mandorla in the cupola mosaic of the Florentine Baptistery, immediately above the tribune and within easy view of the floor, may have « shared in the formation of [Dante's] concept of the tomb of the heretics »<sup>31</sup>. In 1945 Momigliano inserted into his commentary to *Inf.* X a lengthy note on vv. 8-9 in which he relates the descriptive *didascalia* in *Inf.* IX, 106-X, 15, to the central episode of the circle, describing the scene as an atmospheric evocation of the Last Judgement, prelude to the 'resurrection' of Farinata<sup>32</sup>. These insights, however, led neither Wilkins nor Momigliano to tackle the problem of the *contrapasso*. Recently, in a well illustrated and stimulating article, A. K. Cassell has pointed to links between the figure of

<sup>31</sup> In *Dante and the Mosaics of his « bel San Giovanni »*, « *Speculum* », 2, 1927, pp. 1-10, now in E. H. Wilkins, *The Invention of the Sonnet and Other Studies in Italian Literature* (Rome, 1959), pp. 51-60 (pp. 55, 58-59).

<sup>32</sup> *La Divina Commedia: Inferno*, with commentaries by T. Casini and S. A. Barbi, and A. Momigliano, edited by F. Mazzoni (Florence, 1972), p. 181, and the note to v. 72 on p. 192.

Farinata, « da la cintola in su », and the traditional iconography and theology not only for the Resurrection, but also for the *Imago pietatis* and for Noah in the Ark<sup>33</sup>. Cassell's essay notes a link between heresy and civic disorder in numerous patristic and medieval texts, and at various points he analyses and describes the *contrapasso* as an 'antithesis', 'inversion', 'parody', or 'reversal' of the sacred imagery and the multiple biblical *figuræ* which are arguably reflected in Dante's picture of Farinata<sup>34</sup>. This is a useful corrective to the repeated notion that the *contrapasso* in this circle is one of analogy, like for like, in the elements of both fire and tomb. But one might object, after reading Cassell's amply documented contribution to our understanding of the figurative substratum that underlies Dante's concept of heresy and its punishment, that it assembles, if anything, an excessive number of 'sources' for the image of sin and sinners given in *Inf.* IX-XI, with the result that the principal source, already discernible in the *Convivio*, tends to be crowded or blurred by subsidiary details; and one may be inclined, when faced with an assemblage of patristic passages with which Dante may or may not have been familiar, to lose sight of Dante's capacity for poetic synthesis by which in one stroke the denial of the power of the Resurrection (*Inf.* X, 13-15) determines the *sfondo* for the Sixth Circle, and the allegory in *Conv.* IV, xxii, 13-15 is concentrated into a single image, that of the open tomb, representing the very *colpa* of which it is the instrument of punishment. There is a danger that incidental similarities between the posture temporarily adopted by Farinata and that of the Man of Sorrows or Noah standing in his Ark, may give those compositionally related images an iconographic weight in the Sixth Circle equal to or greater than that of the Resurrection, which would be a basically unsound reading, no matter how clever the detailed exegesis might be<sup>35</sup>. With that proviso in mind, my

<sup>33</sup> *Dante's Farinata and the Image of the Arca*, « Yale Italian Studies », 1, 1977, pp. 335-70.

<sup>34</sup> Mattalia, in his note to *Inf.* IX, 131, had suggested that the tomb embodies a 'contrary' *contrapasso* for the Epicureans; he also refers to *Conv.* IV, xx, 15; see *La Divina Commedia: Inferno, Purgatorio*, edited by D. Mattalia, second edition (Milan, 1966), p. 199.

<sup>35</sup> I would question the grounds for what Cassell makes of the *arce* and

own comments will be limited to the fire in the Sixth Circle, to the tomb of Pope Anastasius on the inner edge of the circle, and to the covers of the tombs. We begin with Dante's description of the flames, noted from the start as the first of two exceptional elements in the sepulchral scene, given first in the description, then confirmed by Virgil's answer to Dante's question:

così facevan quivi d'ogne parte,  
 salvo che 'l modo v'era più amaro;  
 ché tra li avelli fiamme erano sparte,  
 per le quali eran sì del tutto accesi,  
 che ferro più non chiede verun' arte...  
 « Simile qui con simile è sepolto,  
 e i monumenti son più e men caldi ».  
 (*Inf.* IX, 116-20, 130-31)

The flames which are spread across the « grande campagna », heating the tombs from the outside (and beneath?), are in most commentaries glossed as an element of the *poena sensus*, separate from the tomb and related by analogy to the punishment for heresy revived in the thirteenth century<sup>36</sup>. However, after the initial description at the end of Canto IX the flames are not mentioned any-

of the figure of Farinata as Man of Sorrows. As a proper synonym for 'tombs', *arche* occurs twice, in IX, 125 and X, 29; that is, once more than *monimenti* (IX, 131) and *sepulture* (X, 38), but no more frequently than *sepolcri* (IX, 115; X 7), *avelli* (IX, 118; XI, 7), and *tombe* (IX, 129; X, 40). In IX, 125, *arche* rhymes with *eresiarche* and *carche*, a rare rhyme determined by the key noun *eresiarche* which defines the nature of the sin in Circle 6. In X, 29, it is the only synonym which, with normal elision of the article, will maintain the hendecasyllable. As for the *Imago pietatis*, this is an image developed out of the Threnody, between the Deposition and the Burial. It depicts Christ in His most abject and piteous bodily state, the antithesis of that risen splendour He will shortly demonstrate. The heretics lie in open tombs because they denied the bodily resurrection and, ultimately, its cause. The sequence of 'figural' images recalled by Dante in this circle begins with the *Visitatio Sepulchri* and the discovery of the open tomb; it looks ahead to the general resurrection of the dead. An *Imago pietatis* inserted into that sequence would mar the figural *convenientia* evident, from *Convivio* II onwards, throughout Dante's consideration of the Epicureans. At a simpler level, if Farinata is an 'inverted' *Imago pietatis* because he appears « da la cintola in sù », what is Cavalcante, or can we dismiss his posture, « in ginocchie levata », because it occupies only seven *terzine*?

<sup>36</sup> Cassell, pp. 341-44.

where in the remaining two cantos for the circle, neither when the travellers approach the foot of Farinata's tomb, nor when they make their way « per un sentier ch'a una valle fiede », nor even when they seek shelter behind the cover of Anastasius's tomb; and in some early illustrated codices the flames are not depicted at all, partly, I suspect, because the flames are not mentioned or referred to in Cantos X or XI<sup>37</sup>. Yet, leaving the problem of the *contrapasso* aside for the moment, there is another way of seeing these flames that fits the picture of Dis given in Canto IX. The presence of fire in the Sixth Circle is the first instance of that punitive element peculiar to Lower Hell which will recur in both the Seventh and the Eighth circles<sup>38</sup>; but the form of punishment proper to heretics, one which occurs in no other circle, is burial in an open tomb. The fire is an accidental variant registering and matching the relative gravity of different heresies, and it adheres to the tombs of the heretics as a necessary instrument of physical torment, subjecting the sinners to an obvious *poena sensus* but altering the *degree* of suffering, not its kind: « salvo che 'l modo v'era più amaro » (*Inf.* IX, 117). Even allowing for the 'purification' wrought by fire on the heretics, we see, perhaps above all, the immediate visual impact of the flames once the travellers enter the City of Dis<sup>39</sup>. It is the first visible proof, after the intimidating trial undergone outside the walls, that they have penetrated

<sup>37</sup> For a description of early MS illustrations of Cantos IX-XI see P. Brieger, M. Meiss, C. S. Singleton, *Illuminated Manuscripts of the Divine Comedy*, 2 vols (London, 1969), vol. I, pp. 127-30; for reproductions, vol. II, pp. 126-49. Flames are not evident in or around the tombs depicted in Plates 129b, 137a, 137c, 140b, 143a, b, 148a, b. In the second of the *gran naso* editions, *Dante con l'espositioni di Christoforo Landino, et d'Alessandro Vellutello* (Venice, 1578), the engraving for Canto IX, f. 53r, shows flames round all the tombs in the outer ring, whereas there are no flames in the same design for Canto X, f. 60r. In the MSS that depict them, the variety of flames— rising between and above the tombs, clustered in bonfires round the base of each tomb, inside as well as outside each tomb — suggests that the painters were not sure or were not particularly concerned to show how the tombs were heated and did not envisage a specific role for fire in the *contrapasso*.

<sup>38</sup> Circle 7, girone 3, blasphemers, sodomites, and usurers; Circle 8, bolgia 3, simoniacs; Circle 8, bolgia 7, thieves; Circle 8, bolgia 8, fraudulent counsellors.

<sup>39</sup> Padoan, *Il canto degli Epicurei*, p. 23, notes that the flames and the mosques seen from beyond the city prepare the travellers for the Circle of Heretics.

within the « città roggia » and are now on the upper periphery of that « basso inferno », where the *gehennè ignis* is reserved for sins of intent. The fire confirms that heresy, whether structurally transitional or not in Dante's scheme of *colpe*, qualifies for Lower Hell<sup>40</sup>; while the fire, dispersed as it is right across the open plain, provides material proof for Virgil's explanation of the initial, searing external aspect of the city when it first came into clear sight:

Lo buon maestro disse: « Omai, figliuolo,  
s'appressa la città c'ha nome Dite,  
coi gravi cittadin, col grande stuolo ».  
E io: « Maestro, già le sue meschite  
là entro certe ne la valle cerno,  
vermiglie come se di foco uscite  
fossero ». Ed ei mi disse: « Il foco eterno  
ch'entro l'affoca le dimostra rosse,  
come tu vedi in questo basso inferno ».  
(*Inf.* VIII, 67-75)

That is, the first *poena* within the City of Dis had to incorporate material fire as one of its visible elements, regardless of the sin it punished; or, put another way, the first band of sinners within the city had to be susceptible of a punishment which provided in 'tangible' form a satisfactory internal architectural extension of the ramparts seen from outside in Canto VIII (the tombs), and which, at the same time, allowed an immediate material source of the « foco eterno / ch'entro l'affoca » to be sufficiently in evidence to explain the appearance of the skyline as it first struck the travellers while still outside the walls, a skyline lit up from within and below: « come se di foco uscite... le dimostra rosse ». This also helps us to see why the Circle of the Heretics is not spatially subdivided, layer over layer, and why a single punishment is meted out to all heretics, regardless of their particular doctrinal aberration and the appropriateness or otherwise of the open tomb to heresies other than Epicurean materialism<sup>41</sup>. Momigliano's intuition of « uno scenario

<sup>40</sup> See E. Moore, *Studies in Dante: Second Series* (Oxford, 1889, reprinted 1968), pp. 176-80.

<sup>41</sup> Like Circles 1-5, and unlike Circles 7-9, Circle 6 is undivided, and in that sense the heretics are disposed like the sinners of incontinence, with one sin and one punishment for the whole circle, distinguished only according to the degree

da novissimi » remains a cogent explanation for the precise visual and dramatic climax to a series of 'figural' experiences which, over the preceding two cantos, have recalled Christ's victory over death and his Descent into Hell at that crucial point in the *itinerarium mentis* where the pilgrim's approach to the deepest recesses of human perversity is presented as an entry into a hostile and seemingly impregnable city. The self-evident connection between the burning of heretics and the flames in the Sixth Circle has provided some foothold on the slippery surface of the *contrapasso* in this circle, but at the expense of a sure grasp of the wider structural and visual implications of the presence of fire at this point in the journey. More serious, however, has been the consequent neglect of the open tomb as the specific instrument of the heretics' *poena*. Given that neglect it is not surprising that the opening lines of Canto XI have occasioned so little critical comment.

Passing across Canto X to the « grand'avello », behind the displaced (« levato ») cover of which the two travellers take shelter so as to acclimatize themselves to the stench rising from the circle below (*Inf.* XI, 1-12), no flames are encountered; and if, like the other tombs, the « grand'avello » is « acceso »<sup>42</sup>, its cover is apparently far enough from the tomb to afford safe temporary protection from a « tristo fiato » now assailing the nose, where earlier the flames had assailed the eye. This new sense experience is the first sign of an imminent moral corruption more putrid than any stench

of individual suffering. The « grande campagna » within the walls of Dis maintains the single-level layout of the circles above and thus provides a gradual topographical transition from Upper to Lower Hell. The extended vision, over three cantos, of a sin and a punishment eschatological in nature introduces the pilgrim to sins of a new order beginning with a sin of 'pure' intent (heresy is an intellectual turning away from a spiritual good, not a turning to any material good, and part of the difficulty in discerning the place of fire in this *contrapasso* is to see how the 'bodily' suffering caused by fire is proportionate to a sin which is not a turning to bodily things, as it should be according to the *Summa contra gentiles* IV, 90, 6) punished by a *poena* tailored intellectually to the sin but incorporating an obvious and obligatory physically punitive element proper to Lower Hell.

<sup>42</sup> In several of the illuminated MSS Pope Anastasius's «avello» is not « acceso »; see *Illuminated Manuscripts of the Divine Comedy*, II, Plates 143a, b, 148a, b.

rising from an open tomb<sup>43</sup>, and thus the large tomb and the cover by which they shelter do not so much shield them from the stench as condition them to the fetid air in which they will shortly move, meanwhile fortifying the pilgrim with a palpable image of the resurrection of the just throughout that delay during which Virgil gives his rational analysis of the dispositions of divine justice and of eternal punishment. Thus we see that the moral topography of Hell is outlined not in the shadow of heresy but in the shadow of the Resurrection. In this prologue to Canto XI, which ensures narrative and figural continuity from Canto IX to Canto XII, the commentators are usually content to note Dante's 'medieval' mistaken identification of Pope Anastasius II with Emperor Anastasius I, and Photinus of Thessalonica with Photinus of Sirmium<sup>44</sup>. A link between the heretics in Pope Anastasius's tomb and those in the tomb with Epicurus has not been offered, to my knowledge, and the inscription which the pilgrim reads out would appear to add merely an epigraphic touch to the sepulchral *sfondo* already vividly evoked at the end of Canto IX, that being a descriptive passage to which these lines form an obvious pendant. I suspect that the reason for this neglect, where disparate and dislocated passages in so many of the circles and cantos have been reduced to some kind of unity, lies in the *contrapasso*, which, loosely and variously understood as it often has been in the case of the Epicureans, cannot easily be extended to the other heresy noted in the circle, a heresy which seems to have been confined to the early Church and to have had no effective later following. But if we bear in mind that the key to the *poena* in this circle is denial of the bodily resurrection,

<sup>43</sup> Boccaccio, in his *Esposizioni sopra la Comedia di Dante*, edited by G. Padoan (Milan, 1965), p. 511, perhaps recalling the « recettaculo di corruttibili cose » in *Conv.* IV, xxii, 15, 'confuses' heretics with the hypocrites in Matthew 23.27: « Vae vobis scribae et pharisaei hypocritae, quia similes estis sepulchris dealbatis, quae aforis parent hominibus speciosa, intus vero plena sunt ossibus mortuorum et omni spurcitia! ». Benvenuto da Imola, in his *Comentum super Dantis Aldigherij Comoediam*, edited by G. F. Lacaia, 5 vols (Florence, 1887), vol. I, p. 325, notes that a « magnus foetur » exhales from the tombs, as if they lay open to release that stench.

<sup>44</sup> See B. Nardi, *lettura* on Canto XI in *Lecture dantesche*, edited by G. Getto (Florence, 1964), pp. 194-96; P. Bertolini, the *voce Anastasio II*, *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, I, pp. 247-51; R. Manselli, the *voce Fotino*, *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, II, p. 993.



we may see a connection with the Photinian heresy which makes the open tomb as fit a punishment for Anastasius as it is for Farinata and Cavalcante.

Dante took Pope Anastasius to be the Western propagator of the Acacian heresy, spread in the East by Photinus, which denied the personal subsistence of the Word and the divinity of Christ<sup>45</sup>. In the early conciliar anathemas the formula is restricted to the belief that Christ's nature derived solely and completely from His mother.<sup>46</sup> However, in the *Summa contra gentiles* Aquinas makes it clear that in the doctrine going by the name 'Photinian' it was the normal, 'human' defects of Christ's body and flesh, including the fear of death, which ruled out the co-existence of a divine nature; and in his refutation Aquinas cites the Resurrection as the sole and irrefutable proof that Christ's divinity was eternal<sup>47</sup>. Thus, if Photinus denied, in fact, that the Resurrection proved the eternal divinity of Christ, the singling out of a papal representative of Photinianism is in line with Dante's high concept of the Petrine office and the Petrine succession, for they are founded on St. Peter's recognition of Christ's divinity<sup>48</sup>. The denial of Christ's divinity and the assertion of the mortality of the soul have as their common element disbelief in the Resurrection, hence the fittingness of an open tomb for the followers of Photinus as for the followers of Epicurus. The pilgrim's long pause at the foot of Farinata's tomb,

<sup>45</sup> For the place of Photinus of Sirmium in fourth-century theological controversy see J. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrine*, fifth edition (London, 1977), pp. 240-47.

<sup>46</sup> See H. Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, edited by C. Rahner (Barcelona, Freiburg, and Rome, 1957), articles 63, 85, 228a, 233, 710.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles: Book Four, Salvation*, translated by C. J. O'Neil (London, 1975), IV, 4 (pp. 43-48), IV, 9 (pp. 73-75): «From these considerations, of course, it appears that the points from Scripture which both Photinus and Sabellius used to bring up in support of their opinions cannot confirm their errors. For what our Lord says after the resurrection, «All power has been given to Me in heaven and in earth» (Matt. 28:18), is not said for this reason: that at that time He had newly received this power; but for this reason: that the power which the Son of God had eternally received had — because of the victory He had had over death by resurrection — begun to appear in the same Son made man» (IV, 9, 1-2).

<sup>48</sup> Matthew 16.13-20; Mark 8.27-30; Luke 9.18-21; and see *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, articles 727a-727f, 755g-755h.

in which we may discern figural echoes of the *Visitatio Sepulchri*<sup>49</sup>, is in Canto XI matched by an even longer pause alongside the cover of Pope Anastasius's tomb, in sustained physical contact (« ci raccostammo... ad un coperchio ») with a stone cover completely removed from the tomb, which for the Holy Women had been the very proof that their Lord had risen. In the narrative economy of the Sixth Circle Pope Anastasius need not appear at all. He *is* there, as his epitaph makes clear, certainly present in his open « avello » where Christ, whose divinity he denied, was certainly absent from His. And the « via dritta » from which Photinus drew him and which, at this moment of recapitulation in the journey recalls the « diritta via » in the poem's *incipit*, is defined as belief in the Resurrection of Christ and the concomitant resurrection of the body (the last article of faith)<sup>50</sup>, which had furnished the master image for the pilgrim's descent *ad inferos* on the evening of Good Friday in the year 1300. This brings us to our final observation, on the covers of the tombs in the Circle of the Heretics.

The absence of covers is noted three times in a similar phrase, the last a *hapax legomenon*: « tutti li lor coperchi eran sospesi » (*Inf.* IX, 121); « già son levati / tutt'i coperchi » (*Inf.* X, 8-9); « allor surse a la vista scoperchiata » (*Inf.* X, 52). In all three cases, and especially the last, the past participle and the passive form show not so much the angle or position of the cover as that it has suffered the action of removal. This seems to have escaped critical comment but should not, on that account, be dismissed as a trifle or as a mere coincidence<sup>51</sup>. Commentators have described the up-lifted or removed covers as if they were trapdoors enabling future heretics to enter their respective tombs, and/or releasing the laments of the shades within, and/or allowing Farinata and Cavalcante to rise into view above the rim of their sarcophagus<sup>52</sup>. But if the

<sup>49</sup> See Cassell, pp. 345, 349, and note 52.

<sup>50</sup> In the earliest *Symbola*, the primitive formula, « carnis resurrectionem » (Denzinger, articles 2 and 6) gives way to a more elaborate formula, in articles 14 and 16, determined by early controversy over the Incarnation and the Trinity.

<sup>51</sup> Cassell, pp. 358-59, explains it in terms of Genesis 8.13 and patristic analogies between the Ark and the Church.

<sup>52</sup> C. S. Singleton's comments in D. A., *The Divine Comedy: Inferno, Commentary* (Princeton, 1970), pp. 142, reflect the mixture of confidence and doubt that surrounds this point of interpretation.

covers merely served some such utilitarian and non-punitive purpose they would depend for their position not on the eternal provisions of divine justice but on the contingent presence of a possible observer. Virgil, however, assigns to the tomb covers a vital function within the eschatological plan for the heretics — «tutti saran serrati», another passive construction conveying an action which can have only one agent — and immediately, in this, the doctrinal heart of the circle, as if the two *terzine* were logically connected, he defines the nature of the principal heresy chosen to exemplify the circle:

« La gente che per li sepolcri giace  
potrebbe veder? già son levati  
tutt' i coperchi, e nessun guardia face ».

E quelli a me: « Tutti saran serrati  
quando di losafàt qui torneranno  
coi corpi che là sù hanno lasciati.

Suo cimitero da questa parte hanno  
con Epicuro tutti suoi seguaci,  
che l'anima col corpo morta fanno ».

(*Inf.* X, 7-15)

Virgil's lines are not in answer to the question, « la gente... potrebbe veder? », but a response to Dante's observation that the cover is off every tomb and that the tombs are not guarded; and we note in this exchange how Dante's iconographically-based assumption, which even recalls the guard placed by Pilate to prevent theft of the body<sup>53</sup>, is immediately set by Virgil in a future reverse perspective of the bodily resurrection, when the heretics' mortal bodies will rise on earth only to be enclosed forever in the tombs where their airy bodies now lie. The « coperchi sospesi » / « levati » are thus an essential preface to the lapidary definition of Epicurean heresy: « che l'anima col corpo morta fanno ». In I Corinthians 15, which Dante had recalled in *Conv.* II, VIII, 11 and *Conv.* IV, VII, 3, the individual bodily resurrection is tied to the Resurrection of Christ as effect to cause; to deny one is to deny the other. It follows

<sup>53</sup> Matthew 27.62-66; most commentators take the absence of guards to refer to the disappearance of Furies and devils since *Inf.* IX, 106. Nowhere in the *Inferno* does the noun *guardia* denote the infernal custodians.

that to affirm that the soul dies with the body — and in *Inf.* X, 15, the heresy is couched as an affirmation, more contumacious than a denial — is to deny that the soul will ever re-animate the body. It is to deny a personal bodily resurrection and, in Pauline terms, to deny the cause of that resurrection itself.

In the prose allegory of the *Visitatio Sepulchri* (*Conv.* IV, xxii, 15) Dante had translated the only Gospel account of the actual removal of the stone from the sepulchre: « Angelus enim Domini descendit de caelo, et accedens revolvit lapidem, et sedebat super eum » (Matt. 28.2). The other evangelists are less graphic but no less insistent on this detail:

Et dicebant ad invicem: Quis revolvat nobis lapidem ab ostio monumenti? Et respicientes viderunt revolutum lapidem. Erat quippe magnus valde.

(Mark 16.3-4)

et invenerunt lapidem revolutum a monumento.

(Luke 24.2)

Una autem sabbati, Maria Magdalene venit mane, cum adhuc tenebrae essent, ad monumentum, et vidit lapidem sublatum a monumento.

(John 20.1)

The sign of the Resurrection is the uncovered tomb; the first intimation that the Lord had risen, as recorded by all the evangelists, was the fact that the stone cover had been removed. Christ could have passed through that stone cover leaving its seal unbroken, just as He would demonstrate His risen power before the Ascension by passing through locked doors into rooms where His disciples were gathered<sup>54</sup>; but the visible proof, not of His risen person but of the act of His being raised to bodily life, is the stone rolled away from the tomb. This is the key to the form of punishment peculiar to the sinners in the Sixth Circle, the key to the punitive function of the displaced covers as it is described in Canto X.

The medieval figurative tradition helps us to understand the assurance with which Dante fixed on the open tomb for his heretics. Until the twelfth century the Resurrection was represented, in the

<sup>54</sup> Mark 16.14; Luke 24.36; John 20.19, 26. For the sequence of Christ's post-Resurrection appearances see Brown, pp. 99-111.

West as in the East, by the Visit of the Holy Women to the Sepulchre, and in the West that sepulchre was normally depicted as a sarcophagus with no cover or with its cover obviously raised or displaced — a « coperchio sospeso » or a « coperchio levato ». In Italy, where Byzantine models were re-vitalized in the thirteenth century, this scene was standard until the early fourteenth century, when the depiction of the risen Christ began to vie with the Holy Women at the Sepulchre as the image for the Resurrection<sup>55</sup>. The bodily resurrection of the just could not be depicted in this way, but since, as St. Paul makes clear in I Corinthians 15, the faithful will rise from the dead as Christ rose from the dead, the general resurrection on the last day was depicted, literally, as a multiple emulation of the imagined event on Easter Sunday morning, just as the Resurrection itself began to be depicted in Italy soon after 1300 — sarcophagi rectangular above the ground, their covers lifted or removed, the occupant, often more than one to a tomb, clambering out<sup>56</sup>. This is the scene which Dante reproduces in the Sixth Circle of the *Inferno*: « sepulcri », « avelli », « arche », « tombe », « monumenti », « sepulture » (no mere lexical *varietas* but a bewildering multiplicity of similar forms), their « coperchi tutti sospesi » and/or « levati », their « viste scoperchiate », in one of which lie the souls of those who denied the bodily resurrection, in another of which lie those who denied the divinity of Christ that was proved by His Resurrection. And since these souls deny or reject the fundamental hope of the Christian belief, the hope which alone will fortify the pilgrim as he descends into the depths of human corruption, it is *their* heresy in its two variants which Dante selects to determine the form of *poena* for all the heretics in the circle.

<sup>55</sup> See Réau, II, pp. 538-50. Young, I, p. 369, notes that the centre-stage appearance of the risen Christ is not documented in drama before the late twelfth century. For the revival of Byzantine models in thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century Italian art see Kitzinger, pp. 358-78, and O. Demus, *Byzantine Art and the West* (London, 1970), pp. 205-41.

<sup>56</sup> The biblical sources, principally Job 19.25-27, Daniel 12.1-3, II Maccabees 12.43-46, Matthew 25.31-46, I Corinthians, 15.1-58, and Revelations 10.11-13, set this subject in the context of the Last Judgement, the iconography of which is outlined in Réau, II, pp. 725-57.

It would seem clear, then, that the «coperchio sospeso»/«levato» underlies the «condizion» locked immediately within the ramparts of Dis (*Inf.* IX, 107-08), and we are now in a position to outline the function of the open tomb and its displaced cover in the *contrapasso* for the Sixth Circle:

(a) Christ was known to have risen when the stone was seen to be rolled away from the sepulchre. The open tombs in which the heretics are buried should by rights be empty because they are uncovered. Hence the fire, which in the opening description (*Inf.* IX, 109-11, 117-23) produces the «duri lamenti» that succeed the first visual impression, serves to prove at the outset, against all the expectations provided by the Gospel narrative and its pictorial tradition, that these open tombs are still inhabited.

(b) When, at the Last Judgement, the mortal bodies of the just rise in glory, they will break out of their tombs, displacing the covers forever; but those bodies which rise on earth then descend to join their souls in the Sixth Circle, will there be reburied and their tombs shut for eternity in the cemetery of Dis (*Inf.* X, 10-12).

(c) The risen just will enter into divine knowledge; but when the bodies and souls of the heretics are reconstituted, their present limited vision will be cut off forever with the sealing of their tombs (*Inf.* X, 100-08). This added refinement to their future *poena*, drawn out of Farinata's prophecy and Cavalcante's ignorance, binds the central episode of Canto X to the *didascalia* under the master image of the open tomb.

In *Convivio* IV and *Inferno* IX-XI, written between c. 1307 and c. 1311, we see Dante astride a turning-point in the visual conception of the Resurrection, a change represented in Italy by Duccio's panel on the reverse of the *Maestà* (the traditional composition, painted between 1308 and 1311) and Giotto's fresco in the Scrovegni Chapel (a new format, painted between c. 1304 and 1312-13)<sup>57</sup>. In *Conv.* IV, xxii Dante's adaptation of the three

<sup>57</sup> Arguments for the dating of Giotto's work in the Scrovegni Chapel are

Myrophores to the three schools of Pagan thought reflects an instinctive *convenientia* by which representatives of ancient Greek wisdom find their exact counterpart in the ancient Byzantine image of the Holy Women at the Sepulchre. In *Inf. X*, however, the new Western image of Christ rising bodily from His tomb lies behind the physical gestures of two contemporary Italian disciples of Epicurus, both of whom mime a *contrafactum* of the bodily resurrection which they denied in life and from which their ultimate *poena* will eternally bar them:

« Vedi là Farinata che s'è dritto:  
da la cintola in sù tutto 'l vedrai »...

ed el s'ergea col petto e con la fronte...

Allor surse a la vista scoperchiata  
un'ombra, lungo questa, infino al mento:  
credo che s'era in ginocchie levata...

supin ricadde e più non parve fora...

Indi s'ascose...

(*Inf. X*, 32-33, 35, 52-54, 72, 121)

Yet the particular form of punishment devised by Dante for all his heretics, ancient and modern, is that one element common to both the old and new representations of Resurrection, the essential, tangible sign that remained independant of compositional change, the sign which alone gave meaning to the images of the three Maries and the risen Christ, and which defines the pilgrim's first acquisition within the City of Dis as a renewed hope in the bodily resurrection.

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